



# Administrative Policy

<b>Policy Title:</b>	Media Contact Policy and Procedure	<b>Revision No.</b>	2006.2	
<b>Author:</b>	Jennifer Grentz, Public Affairs Manager	<b>Date of this Revision</b>	10/05/2007	
<b>Applicable Personnel:</b>	All Departments, Committees, Commissions, and Council	<b>Policy No.</b>	AIT2006.1	<b>Page No.</b> 1 of 5

## 1.0 Purpose of Policy

Effective communications with the media are critical to the City of Maricopa's ability to provide accurate and consistent messaging. Effective media relations best serve the city by:

- informing the public of what we can do for them
- promoting achievements, activities and events of significance
- expanding the general visibility of the city
- ensuring that accurate information is conveyed to the public regarding incidents and issues of a controversial and/or sensitive nature

## 2.0 General Procedures for Dealing with the Media

The Public Affairs Manager serves as the official spokesperson and conveys the official city position on issues of general impact or significance or situations that are of a particularly controversial or sensitive nature. Inquiries from the media about such issues should be referred to the Public Affairs Manager.

Depending on the specific circumstances, the City Manager or the Public Affairs Manager may designate another director to serve as spokesperson on a particular issue.

In cases of critical significance to the city, the Public Affairs Manager will work with other city officials to develop a "position paper" to detail the known facts of the situation and summarize the city's position.

In the event of a crisis or emergency situation, the Public Affairs Manager will handle all contacts with the media, and will coordinate the information flow from the city to the public. In such situations, all departments should refer calls from the media to the Public Affairs office.

City of Maricopa department directors are free to respond to requests from the media regarding their area of expertise. In such cases, the Public Affairs Manager should be notified as soon as possible. Such notification can be particularly important if follow-up inquiries are made with other city personnel to ensure a coordinated, consistent response. Media inquiries should be referred to the Public Affairs Manager if they involve issues with city-wide significance and/or are of a controversial or sensitive nature.

Since positive media solicitation is an integral element of the city's communications program, any ideas for articles or pieces that would positively portray the city, its work or its community should also be directed to the Public Affairs Manager. In a similar manner, Public Affairs should be notified about negative occurrences that are likely to rise to the level of a news story.

Guidelines for communicating with the media when the issue is non-controversial and limited to the director's area of expertise:



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- Obtain the name of the person calling, the media organization and, if available, the anticipated time of release of information in print or broadcast. This information should be included when the notification is made to the Public Affairs Manager.
- The best approach with the media is to be prompt, helpful and honest. All contacts from the media should be returned as soon as possible, in deference to reporters' deadlines. At the most, a call should be returned within a half-day. If that is not possible, an alternate employee (if appropriate) or the Public Affairs Manager should be asked to handle the call.
- Make sure you understand each question from the media before answering. If you cannot answer the question, or are uncomfortable providing a response, take the reporter's number and advise him/her that someone who can provide the information will contact him/her as soon as possible. Then follow-up by contacting the Public Affairs Manager.
- Do not offer speculations or gossip. Do not answer a reporter's question with "no comment." Do not be condescending or underestimate the reporter's intelligence, but make sure the reporter understands your responses. Provide your phone number and/or e-mail address for follow-up questions.
- Remember that in responding to the media, you are seen as representing and speaking for the city. Personal opinions should be clearly and carefully identified as such.
- Issues that should not be discussed with reporters are 1) legal issues, 2) personnel issues, 3) questions that involve integrity, such as ethics or issues that may result in harm to others, or 4) a crisis or emergency. Refer all such inquiries to the Public Affairs Manager.

## 3.0 Written Communication with the Media

### 3.1 News Releases

- 3.1.A News Releases shall be prepared and routed to the Public Affairs Manager or designee for final review before they are released to the media. Interdepartmental News Releases promoting special events can be released to the general media after receiving approval from the department director.
- 3.1.B Boards, commissions or committees may send out releases publicizing specific city events (date, time, place, etc.) after being reviewed by their respective departments and forwarding a copy to the Public Affairs Manager. This requirement will ensure that information is current and correct as well ensuring a unified message being presented.
- 3.1.C This policy allows for specific exceptions. Fire and Police responses to emergencies in the community may be reported directly to the media by a designated department spokesperson with the approval of the Fire or Police Chief. Police Department releases concerning traffic advisories, investigations and other routine community relations activities may also be reported directly to the media. Any releases deemed to be of concern to the



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community should also be copied to the City of Maricopa's Public Affairs Manager or designee.

- 3.1.D All departments, boards, commissions, or committees shall use the standard City of Maricopa News Release format to distribute information to the media.
- 3.1.E All News Releases shall include the name, telephone number and department, board, commission or committee of the individual who has prepared the release.
- 3.1.F All News Releases containing controversial or sensitive materials and/or matters relating to general public safety shall be approved by the Public Affairs Manager or designee and distributed to the Mayor and members of the City Council prior to release to the media.
- 3.1.G All written communications will be done in AP Style, which is the accepted style of the media.

## 3.2 Editorials/Op-Eds

- 3.2.A City staff that are approached or who desire to write an editorial or opinion piece as a representative of City Hall will meet with and get approval from the City Manager.
- 3.2.B This is done to ensure that these pieces send out messages consistent with the City.
- 3.2.C Many editorials/opinion pieces could serve as news articles for all media – or additional stories could be made from the piece.
- 3.2.D Need to ensure that the piece reflects the views of the City and not personal opinion.

## 3.3 News Release Distribution Process

- 3.3.A News releases issued by a department should be submitted to the Public Affairs Manager or designee for review, approval and distribution coordination. Not all that happens in city departments may merit a separate news release. Some items may be best handled as a "media advisory" or a feature story suggestion. Other items may be best handled as correspondence to a particular group.
- 3.3.B A department may also request that the Public Affairs Manager issue a News Release on its behalf, after providing the Public Affairs Manager with all relevant information. The News Release will be sent to the requesting department for review and approval before



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distribution.

3.3.C Once approved, the Public Affairs Manager or designee will be responsible for distribution to the news media. The initiating department is responsible for sending copies to their personnel.

3.3.D News releases issued after 4:00 PM should include an after hours or evening contact telephone number.

## 3.4 Media Distribution List

3.4.A News Releases shall be sent automatically in electronic format to a list maintained by the Public Affairs Manager or designee comprised of all interested, press-credentialed media.

3.4.B News Releases will be placed on the city website for public information purposes.

3.4.C All files will be distributed via PDF to ensure electronic data transmission security.

## 3.5 Other Publications

3.5.A All published reports, brochures, fact sheets, or any other printed material, should be sent to the Public Affairs Office to be archived and posted to the Web site.

## 3.6 Calendar Announcements

3.6.A All public and/or community meetings should be reported to the Public Affairs Manager or designee and included on the city's weekly calendar, which is shared with local media and citizen groups and is made available on the city's website.

## 3.7 Documentation

3.7.A The Public Affairs Manager or designee collects many news articles mentioning the City of Maricopa that appear in local/area newspapers. On occasion, articles about city government and staff appear in magazines and professional journals. In an effort to archive this information and to generate additional coverage for city staff and activities, departments are encouraged to send copies of these articles to the Public Affairs Office.

## 3.8 Community Forums

3.8.A City employees shall not represent the City or its departments on any community forum.



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### 4.0 Consent

My signature below confirms that I have read and understand the Media Policy for the City of Maricopa. I agree to comply with all terms and conditions of this policy.

<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Printed Name:</b>		